

autumn. But no argument can be drawn from the fact in favour of the theory which places the primæval seat of the Aryan race within the Arctic Circle, since the civil year of the Jews also began with the ingathering of the harvest at the time of the autumnal equinox, and no one would propose to transfer their forefathers to the distant north.

The points of likeness between the mythologies and religious conceptions of the Kelts and Scandinavians, to which Prof. Rhys has drawn attention, are numerous and striking. How many of them go back to an age when the ancestors of the Scandinavians and of the Aryan Kelts still lived together it is impossible to tell, but several of them can most easily be explained as due to borrowing. It is now well established that Norse mythology and religion were influenced not only by Christianity but also by the mythology and religion of the Kelts, with whom the Norsemen came into contact in the Hebrides, in Ireland, and in the Channel Islands, and in a comparison between Keltic and Scandinavian legends this influence must always be allowed for.

I must not part from Prof. Rhys's learned and important lectures without exercising the privilege of a reviewer by objecting to certain of his conclusions. These relate to the Keltic allusions to a Deluge, and to the stories of a contest between the gods and the monsters of the lower world. Whatever may be the origin of the Keltic myths which are supposed to refer to such events, they cannot be compared with the Indian legend of the deluge of Manu or with the story of the conflict between the gods of Olympus and the Titans. It has long since been pointed out by Lenormant that the Indian legend was borrowed from Babylonia; and its hero, Manu, has nothing to do with the Kretan Minôs. Apart from the unlikeness of the vowel in the first syllable of the two names, Minôs seems to be a word of Phœnician origin. The conflict between the gods and the Titans, again, has now been traced to Babylonia. Like the twelve labours of Herakles, the Babylonian epics have been recovered in which the story appears in its earliest form, before it was passed on to the Greeks through the hands of the Phœnicians. The Titans and Herakles were alike figures of Semitic, and not of Aryan, mythology.

I have left myself space to do no more than draw attention to two very interesting questions suggested by Prof. Rhys's lectures. It is in Scandinavian rather than in Latin mythology that he finds parallels to the myths and legends of the Kelts. Nevertheless, linguistic science teaches us that the Keltic dialects had most affinity to Latin and not to the Scando-Teutonic languages. Was Latin mythology, then, so profoundly modified by some foreign system of faith, such as the Etruscan, as to have lost a considerable part of its original character even before it passed under the influence of the Greeks? Was it, in fact, Etruscanized before it was Hellenized? The other question relates to the causes which have reduced the gods of a former age to the human kings and princes of later Keltic legend. The same transformation characterizes the traditions of ancient Persia, as it also characterizes Semitic tradition. In the case of Persia, such unconscious euhemerism seems to have been brought about by a change of creed. Was this also the reason why in Keltic story the ancient Sky-god became Nuada of the Silver Hand? If so, the old theology would have

remained practically unchanged until the conversion of its adherents to Christianity, and the growth of most of the mythology beneath which Prof. Rhys has discovered the forms of dishonoured deities would have taken place in the centuries which immediately followed the fall of the Roman Empire. They are the same centuries, be it remembered, which divide the history of Britain into two portions, separated from one another by a veil of myth.

A. H. SAYCE.

HAND-BOOK OF THE AMARYLLIDÆ.

Hand-book of the Amaryllidæ. By J. G. Baker, F.R.S. 203 pp. (London: George Bell, 1888.)

SINCE Herbert's "*Amaryllidææ*," published in 1837, there has not been any work brought out containing descriptions of all or approximately all the species of Amaryllidaceous plants until the appearance of this little work. Herbert's volume has long been both rare and out of date, and some such book as the present was a desideratum. Neither could anyone be found who has a better or more extensive knowledge of the bulbous plants than Mr. Baker, whose monographs of the Liliaceæ and Iridaceæ are well known to all lovers of these groups. The work before us is the result of twenty-three years' study, and embodies descriptions drawn up not only from herbarium material, but especially from living plants—some grown at Kew Gardens, others from the conservatories and gardens of professional and amateur cultivators. It is intended as a working hand-book for gardeners and botanists, and as such seems suited for its purpose.

The group of Amaryllidææ is one which has suffered in popularity from the modern rage for Orchids. A glance at the volume will show that many species were introduced into cultivation from fifty to a hundred years ago, and are now quite lost from our gardens. In those days Cape bulbs were very popular; and Masson at the close of the last century, and Cooper and others in later years, introduced many beautiful and curious plants now known to us only by their dried specimens and drawings. Of these the curious South African genus *Gethyllis* is a striking example, six out of the nine species here described being only known from Masson's sketches and specimens, and this in spite of the numerous careful and energetic collectors we have now at the Cape of Good Hope.

One reason for this disappearance of species is the very narrow limits of their distribution in many cases, although it appears that the individuals are often abundant when the right locality is reached. Witness, for example, the little *Tapeinanthus* of Spain and Morocco, discovered by Cavanilles in 1794, and lost again till two years ago, when it was re-discovered in profusion by Mr. Maw, who has stocked our gardens with it; and very similar are the cases of the strange green-flowered *Narcissus* of Gibraltar and the *Lapiedra*, known to Clusius as early as 1574, and still a great rarity even in herbaria at the present day. When it is remembered that these three plants grow in localities close to our own shores, it is not surprising that many of the more distant South African species figured by Jacquin in his sumptuous works, as well as many Andean and Peruvian species, are still absent from our gardens and houses.

Besides the rarity of some of these plants, they have a habit of entirely disappearing after flowering, and indeed in many cases they will only appear at irregular and long intervals, which also conspires to make them difficult to procure, so that collectors are necessarily anxious to know the time of the year at which they should be looked for in flower, and this the author has where possible added to his description.

The volume includes, besides the typical Amaryllideæ, the Alstrœmeriæ and Agaveæ, but the Hypoxideæ and Velloziæ are omitted on the grounds that they have been elsewhere fully dealt with. This we think a pity, as it would have made the work more complete to have included these groups; but this will hardly affect cultivators, with whom the Hypoxids are rarely found favourites on account of their comparatively insignificant flowers and general similarity, while the Vellozias, though they would be welcome additions to our stoves on account of their beautiful flowers, yet baffle our gardeners on account of their bulkiness and slow growth.

In the Agaveæ it will be noticed that of many species (in fact, nearly one-third) only the foliage is known. For garden purposes perhaps the form and number of the leaves may be sufficient, at least for identification; but it cannot be considered satisfactory to publish as new species, and endow with scientific names, plants of which the inflorescence is unknown. The author, however, has but done his duty in incorporating these species into his work.

One may hope that the publication of this compendium will stimulate our amateur gardeners to turn their attention more carefully to this comparatively neglected group. Already for some time signs have not been wanting to show that they are rising into favour again to some extent. The Narcissi, Hippeastrums, and Crinums are undergoing elaborate cultivation and hybridization by the best of our gardeners with the highest success, and if this hand-book contributes to the study of this group it will have done its work.

H. N. R.

OUR BOOK SHELF.

Another World; or, The Fourth Dimension. By A. T. Schofield, M.D. (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1888.)

THIS work consists of seven chapters. The first four—the land of no dimensions, the land of one dimension, the land of two dimensions, and the land of three dimensions—consist of large extracts from “Flatland,” with a running commentary upon them, bringing out their salient facts. Indeed, had not “Flatland” been published, the author admits his own book would not have been written. In Chapter V., the land of four dimensions is mathematically considered, and here we have stated, from analogy, the relations of a being in one dimension with that above him and its inhabitants, *e.g.* one in the third dimension (our world) with the fourth; and in Chapter VI. the land of four dimensions is considered in relation to ours of three. Chapter VII. considers generally the land of four dimensions, with facts and analogies. The fourth dimension is not discussed on the lines of Mr. Hinton’s “What is the Fourth Dimension?” but after the mathematical side of the question has been considered, our author “further considers the actual facts around us bearing on the question, and compares the deduced laws of the fourth dimension with some of the claims of Christianity as stated in the Bible.” Here we must close our notice—as we cannot go into an examination of these

topics in our columns—with saying that there is much of interest in the pages before us, and for some readers the speculations of the later chapters may have as much interest as the mathematical certainties of the earlier chapters have for others.

Euclid's Method, or the Proper Way to Treat on Geometry. By A. H. Blunt. (Shepshed: Freeman, 1888.)

THIS booklet consists of an introduction (pp. 3–10), and the method of treating on geometry (pp. 10–23). We let the writer speak for himself:—“In this small work I have attempted to show the proper way to treat on geometry, and which I conceive was the method of Euclid; for it will be seen that the results are right from the way in which they are arrived at, and that they agree with Euclid’s results. It is certain, I think none will deny, that when Euclid composed his ‘Geometry,’ he did everything in it under the guidance of reason and knowledge of what the true method consists in; but since he has not expressed or shown those reasons (and it would not have been proper, nor would it have been necessary to have done so in his ‘Geometry’), they therefore appear to have been known but very little to anyone else since his time, as is evident from the expressions and unjust fault-finding made against him in the writings of modern geometers, which greatly betray their own ignorance of the true method. So long as the true method remains unknown, it is not to be wondered at that men should busy themselves in finding faults with Euclid, his work being so complete and perfect as to leave them but little else to do. Not that I would be understood to mean that his works ought to be accepted in blind submission as everything perfect, or that no faults, if there are any in it, ought to be pointed out”; and so on. *Ex pede Herculem!* The author’s remarks are made sincerely, and for a certain order of mind his explanations are likely to clear up many points in the Definitions. It is to these only that he confines his attention in pp. 10–23, and he gives good reasons why Euclid should have taken them in the order he has taken them. This was his object: write, then, Q.E.D., and *Vivat Euclides!*

On the Distribution of Rain over the British Isles during the year 1887. Compiled by G. J. Symons, F.R.S. (London: Edward Stanford, 1888.)

MR. SYMONS’S “British Rainfall” is so well known that we need only say of the present issue that it is in no respect inferior to the preceding volumes of the series. The marked characteristic of 1887 was the prevalence of droughts. According to Mr. Symons, the year has had no equal for widespread deficiency of rainfall since 1788. Naturally, therefore, much space is devoted in this volume to the subject of droughts; and in one chapter—on “Historic Droughts”—he has brought together, from a variety of sources, a large amount of information that ought to be as interesting to historians as to meteorologists. In the preface Mr. Symons calls special attention to important additions which have been made to our knowledge of the rainfall of the Lake District. These have resulted from a grant of £42 7s. made by the Royal Society from its own funds in 1886.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

[The Editor does not hold himself responsible for opinions expressed by his correspondents. Neither can he undertake to return, or to correspond with the writers of, rejected manuscripts intended for this or any other part of NATURE. No notice is taken of anonymous communications.]

The “Tamaron” of the Philippine Islands.

A LETTER, which I have just received from our Corresponding Member, the energetic traveller and naturalist, Prof. J. B. Steere,